

Capitalism Or Community
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What do the [Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga](#) all have in common with the United States?

We are the only countries in the world with no national paid family leave.

Paid family leave is a reproductive justice issue. Reproductive justice includes the ability to choose to have children and to adequately care for them after they are born. While the United States did institute a policy for 12-weeks of unpaid leave in 1993 (Family Medical Leave Act), which includes parents caring for children under the age of 1 year, we continue to fail to provide a national policy that ensures at least some pay for families caring for infants.

Whether individual, family, church, corporation, or government, a budget reflects what is most valuable to the entity creating it by showing where available resources will be allocated. A budget is a moral document. Being one of the few countries in the world with no national paid family leave policy demonstrates the U.S. government's value of profits over families and capitalism over the well-being of communities.

[Research clearly shows](#) that paid family leave is not only good for babies and parents; it is good for communities. The benefits of having paid parental leave go far beyond time to bond with a new baby. Paid family leave is associated with [reduced risk of health problems](#), including fewer hospitalizations for infectious diseases for newborns. And, by allowing enough time for post-partum recovery, the mental health of new mothers increases, thereby benefiting the entire family—whether that family consists of a mother and baby, a spouse and more children, and/or other family members.

As many as [95% of the lowest-wage earners](#) in the U.S. are women or people of color or both—and have no paid leave at all, let alone paid family leave. By including paid family leave in the President's social safety net legislation, our government acknowledges the value of women, children, and families, especially those who cannot afford to take unpaid leave. Passing legislation with national paid family leave is a tangible statement for justice. If our legislators refuse to fund national paid family leave, they are making a strong statement about devaluing women, children, and families—most especially low-income people with these identities.

While the proposed legislation at the forefront of the president's agenda includes a proposal for only four weeks of paid family leave, it's a beginning, and would show that we are willing to use at least some of our country's wealth to strengthen families and communities. We are long overdue for this type of national policy. When we care for women and children, we are caring for our communities with an eye and heart toward the future. We are doing the work of the gospel.

Will you join your voice to insist we value justice for all?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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